

APPENDIX F

SNIPER EMPLOYMENT

Snipers play an important role in the battalion task force. They give the commander accurate, discriminatory, long-range small-arms fire. The best use of sniper fire is against key targets that other available weapon systems may be unable to destroy due to their range, size, or location; visibility; security and stealth requirements; avoidance of collateral damage; intensity of conflict; or rules of engagement. The techniques snipers use enable them to gather detailed, critical information about the enemy as a secondary role. The effectiveness of a sniper is measured by more than casualties or destroyed targets. Commanders know snipers also affect enemy activities, morale, and decisions. Knowing snipers are present hinders the enemy's movement, creates confusion and continuous personal fear, disrupts enemy operations and preparations, and compels the enemy to divert forces to deal with the snipers. (See FM 23-10.)

F-1. SNIPER TEAMS

Snipers avoid sustained battles. They operate in two-man teams, each consisting of one sniper and one observer, normally cross-trained. The observer carries an M16-series rifle; the sniper carries the sniper weapon system, and each member has a side arm. Team members help each other with range estimation, round adjustment, and security.

a. **Employment.** The commander or designated sniper employment officer controls sniper teams from a central location. Once deployed, snipers generally operate independently. They must understand the commander's intent, his concept of the operation, and the purpose for their assigned tasks. This allows the teams to exercise initiative within the framework of the commander's intent and to support the commander's concept and accomplishment of the unit's mission. Snipers are effective only in areas that offer good fields of fire and observation. They must have the freedom of action to choose their own positions once on the ground. The number of sniper teams participating in an operation depends on their availability, the expected duration of the mission, and the enemy's strength.

b. **Security Element.** Sniper teams should move with a security element (squad or platoon) whenever possible. This allows the teams to reach their areas of operation faster and safer than if they operated alone. The security element also protects the snipers during operations. When moving with a security element, snipers follow the following guidelines:

- (1) The leader of the security element leads the sniper team.
- (2) Snipers must appear to be an integral part of the security element. To do so, each sniper carries his weapon system in line with and close to his body to hide the weapon's outline and barrel length. Snipers also conceal from view all sniper-unique equipment (optics and ghillie suits).
- (3) The snipers' uniforms must be the same as that of security element members. Snipers and element members maintain proper intervals and positions in the element formation.

c. **Sniper Estimate.** History has proven that commanders need education on the proper use of a sniper. If commanders know the abilities and limitations of a sniper, the sniper can contribute significantly to the fight.

(1) **Mission.** The sniper's primary mission is to support combat operations by delivering precise rifle fire from concealed positions. The mission assigned to a sniper team for a particular operation consists of the task(s) the commander wants the sniper team to accomplish and the reason (purpose) for it. The commander must decide how he wants his sniper team to affect the battlefield. Then he must assign missions to achieve this effect.

(a) The commander should assign priorities to targets so snipers can avoid involvement in sustained engagements. Regardless of the target priorities, the sniper team must be free to change targets to support the commander's intent.

(b) The commander may describe the effect or result he expects and allow the sniper team to select key targets.

(c) The commander may assign specific types of targets to achieve an effect. For example, if he wants to disrupt the defensive preparations of the enemy, he may task snipers to kill bulldozer operators and other engineer equipment operators. He may task them to disable enemy vehicles carrying supplies, or he may task them to engage soldiers digging enemy defensive positions.

(d) The commander may assign specific targets. These can include enemy leaders, command and control operators, antitank guided missile gunners, armored-vehicle commanders, or weapons crews. In cases where large crowds pose a threat to US forces, snipers can single out selected individuals. In populated areas where US forces need to keep casualties to a minimum, snipers can be assigned to kill enemy snipers.

(2) **Enemy.** The commander must consider the characteristics, capabilities, strengths, weaknesses, and disposition of the enemy. Is the enemy force heavy or light, rested or tired, disciplined or not? Is it motorized infantry or towed artillery? Is it well supplied or short of supplies? Is it patrolling aggressively or lax in security? Is it positioned in assembly areas or dug in? The answers to questions like these help the commander determine the enemy's susceptibility and reaction to effective sniper operations. A well-rested, well-led, well-supplied, and aggressive enemy with armored protection poses a greater threat to snipers than one that is tired, poorly led, poorly supplied, lax, and unprotected. The commander needs to know if enemy snipers are present and effective since they can pose a significant danger to his operations and his snipers. The commander must consider the enemy's directed energy weapons capability since snipers are particularly vulnerable to these due to their use of optical devices.

(3) **Terrain.** The commander must evaluate and consider the terrain in and en route to the sniper's area of operations, the time and effort snipers will expend getting into position, and the effects of weather on the sniper and his visibility. Snipers prefer positions at least 300 meters from their target area. Operating at this distance allows them to avoid effective fire from enemy rifles while retaining much of the 800- to 1,000-meter effective range of the sniper rifle. Snipers need areas of operations with adequate observation, fields of fire, and good firing positions.

(4) **Troops.** The commander must decide how many sniper teams to use depending on their availability, the duration of the operation, expected opposition, and the number and difficulty of tasks and targets assigned. Commanders must consider the snipers' level of

training and physical conditioning and remember the effects of these human factors on sniper operations.

(5) **Time Available.** The commander must consider how much time the snipers will have to achieve the result he expects. He must allocate time for snipers to plan, coordinate, prepare, rehearse, move, and establish positions. The commander must understand how the snipers' risk increases when they lack adequate time to plan or to perform other tasks such as move to the area of operations. The amount of time a sniper team can remain in a position without loss of effectiveness due to eye fatigue, muscle strain, or cramps depends mostly on the type of position it occupies. Generally, snipers can remain in an expedient position for 6 hours before they must be relieved. They can remain in belly positions or semi-permanent hides for up to 48 hours before they must be relieved. Normal mission duration times average 24 hours. (FM 23-10 provides guidance on sniper position considerations, construction, and preparation and occupation times.) Movement factors for snipers moving with a security element are the same as for any infantry force. When snipers move alone in the area of operations, they move slowly; their movement can be measured in feet and inches. The sniper team is the best resource in determining how much time is required for their movement.

F-2. OFFENSIVE EMPLOYMENT

Offensive operations carry the fight to the enemy to destroy his capability and will to fight. By killing enemy targets that threaten the success of the attack, the sniper can play a major role in offensive operations.

- a. **Offensive Missions.** During offensive operations, snipers--
 - Conduct countersniper operations.
 - Overwatch movement of friendly forces and suppress enemy targets that threaten the moving forces.
 - Place precision fire on enemy crew-served weapons teams and into exposed apertures of bunkers.
 - Place precision fire on enemy leaders, armored-vehicle drivers or commanders, FOs, and other designated personnel.
 - Place precision fire on small, isolated, bypassed forces.
 - Place precision fire on targets threatening a counterattack or fleeing.
 - Assist in screening a flank using supplemental fires.
 - b. **Movement to Contact.** During a movement to contact, snipers move with the lead element, or they can be employed 24 to 48 hours before the unit's movement to--
 - Select positions.
 - Gather information about the enemy.
 - Deny enemy access to key terrain through controlled precision fires, preventing enemy surprise attacks.
 - c. **Dismounted Assault.** During a mounted attack, fast movement limits the sniper's role. Snipers can provide effective support during a dismounted assault.
- (1) Contact may force the mounted element to dismount and continue moving dismounted. Snipers placed with lead elements move to positions that allow them to overwatch the dismounted movement of the element and provide long-range small-arms fire. Sniper teams are most effective where BFVs and tanks are ineffective--that is, where

these vehicles cannot provide overwatching fires. In certain areas, the terrain may limit BFV and tank mobility. In other areas, the enemy situation may present an unacceptable risk to vehicles occupying hull defilade positions. Vehicle movement could compromise the stealth of the dismounted force. Multiple avenues must be overwatched.

(2) Snipers may also be placed with a mounted support element assigned to suppress, fix, or isolate the enemy on the objective. The sniper rifle's precision fire and lack of blast effect allow the sniper to provide closer supporting fires for assaulting soldiers than the mounted support element can provide. The difference in their weapons' effective ranges requires the snipers and the mounted support element to seek support by fire positions at different ranges when terrain allows. Long after BFVs and tanks are forced to shift or lift their supporting fires, snipers can selectively fire on close-in targets threatening the assault. These targets may be gunners of enemy crew-served weapons or enemy soldiers in fortified positions.

(3) If time permits, snipers may be deployed as soon as the element reaches the dismount point. Because the snipers' weapons have better optics and longer ranges than other types of small arms, they can provide additional long-range observation and precision fire on any enemy targets that may appear. To increase security, snipers may cover different sectors than the mounted elements.

(4) Snipers may move with the dismounted element toward the objective, occupy a close-in support by fire position where they can help suppress or destroy targets threatening the assault of the dismounted element, or move with the dismounted element onto the objective to provide close-in precision fire against enemy fortified positions, bunkers, and trench lines. Selection of the sniper support by fire position depends on METT-TC. The closer snipers are to the objective area, the greater the chance they will be discovered and lose their effectiveness.

(5) If mounted elements appear on the battlefield at the same time snipers arrive, the snipers' security and potential for surprise are degraded. To increase security and surprise, snipers may move covertly into position in an objective area well before the main attack and mounted forces arrive. Ideally, a sniper team going in early moves with infiltrating dismounted infantry. This is faster and more secure than moving alone. After the snipers are in position, dismounted infantrymen may remain nearby as additional security, but they are more likely to have other supporting tasks to perform. The proximity of dismounted infantry enhances security.

(6) After their fires are masked, snipers must reposition as soon as possible. The speed of mechanized assaults may prevent snipers from firing from more than one support position. The commander must carefully evaluate where snipers will be most useful. If he wants to use snipers in several different places, or if he wants them to contribute throughout the attack, he should provide transportation to enable them to move quickly, stealthily, and safely on the battlefield.

(7) Upon consolidation, snipers may displace forward to new positions that are not necessarily on the objective. From these positions, the snipers provide precision fire against bypassed enemy positions, enemy counterattack forces, or other enemy positions that could degrade the unit's ability to exploit the success of the attack.

d. **Raid.** During a raid, sniper teams can join with either the security element or the support element to--

- Cover avenues of approach and escape that lead in and out of the objective.

- Cover friendly routes of withdrawal to the rally point.
- Provide long-range fires on the objective.

F-3. ACTIONS AGAINST FORTIFIED AREAS

Assaulting forces usually encounter some type of fortified positions prepared by the defending force. These can range from field-expedient, hasty positions produced with locally available materials to elaborate steel and concrete emplacements complete with turrets, underground tunnels, and crew quarters. Field-expedient positions are those most often encountered. More elaborate positions are likely when the enemy has had significant time to prepare his defense. He may have fortified weapons emplacements or bunkers, protected shelters, reinforced natural or constructed caves, entrenchments, and other obstacles.

a. **Enemy Defensive Positions.** The enemy tries to locate these positions so they are mutually supporting and arrayed in depth across the width of his sector. He tries to increase his advantages by covering and concealing positions and preparing fire plans and counterattack contingencies. Fortified areas should be bypassed and contained by a small force.

b. **Sniper Support.** The sniper's precision fire and observation capabilities are invaluable in the assault of a fortified area. Precision rifle fire can easily detect and destroy pinpoint targets that are invisible to the naked eye. The snipers' role during the assault of a fortified position is to deliver precision fire against observation posts, exposed personnel, and the embrasures, air vents, and doorways of key enemy positions. The commander plans the order in which snipers should destroy targets. Their destruction should systematically reduce the enemy's defense by destroying the ability of enemy positions to support each other. Once these positions are isolated, they can be reduced more easily. The commander must decide where he will try to penetrate the enemy's fortified positions and then employ his snipers against those locations. Snipers can provide continuous fire support for both assaulting units and other nearby units when operating from positions near the breach point on the flanks. Sniper fires add to the effectiveness of the entire unit; the commander can employ snipers in situations where other resources cannot be used for various reasons.

c. **Sniper Plan.** The sniper team bases its plan on information available. The enemy information it needs includes--

- Extent and exact locations of individual and underground fortifications.
- Fields of fire, directions of fire, locations and number of embrasures, and types of weapons systems in the fortifications.
- Locations of entrances, exits, and air vents in each emplacement.
- Locations and types of existing and reinforcing obstacles.
- Locations of weak spots in the enemy's defense.

F-4. DEFENSIVE EMPLOYMENT

Snipers may effectively enhance or augment any unit's defensive fire plan. After analyzing the terrain, the sniper team should recommend options to the commander.

a. **Defensive Tasks.** The sniper team can perform the following tasks during defensive operations:

- Cover obstacles, minefields, roadblocks, and demolitions.
- Perform counterreconnaissance (kill enemy reconnaissance elements).
- Engage enemy OPs, armored-vehicle commanders exposed in turrets, and ATGM teams.
- Damage enemy vehicles' optics to degrade their movement.
- Suppress enemy crew-served weapons.
- Disrupt follow-on units with long-range small-arms fire.

b. **Primary Positions.** Snipers are generally positioned to observe or control one or more avenues of approach into the defensive position. Due to the types of weapons systems available, snipers may be used against secondary avenues of approach. Sniper employment can increase all-round security and allow the commander to concentrate his combat power against the most likely enemy avenue of approach. Snipers may support the battalion task force by providing extra optics for target acquisition and precise long-range fires to complement those of the M249, M240B, and M2 machine guns. This arrangement seeks to maximize the effectiveness of all the unit's weapons systems. Snipers in an economy-of-force role may cover dismounted enemy avenues of approach into TF positions.

c. **Alternate and Supplementary Positions.** Snipers establish alternate and supplementary positions for all-round security. Positions near the FEBA are vulnerable to concentrated attacks, enemy artillery, and obscurants. Multiple sniper teams, if used, can be positioned for surveillance and mutual fire support. If possible, they should establish positions in depth for continuous support during the fight. The sniper's rate of fire neither increases nor decreases as the enemy approaches. Sniper teams systematically and deliberately shoot specific targets, never sacrificing accuracy for speed.

d. **Key Terrain.** The commander can position snipers to overwatch key obstacles or terrain such as river-crossing sites, bridges, minefields, or anything that canalizes the enemy directly into engagement areas. Snipers are mainly used where weapons systems are less effective due to security requirements or terrain. Even though weapons systems with greater range and optics capability than the snipers' weapons are available to the commander, he may be unable to use them for any of several reasons. They might present too large a firing signature, be difficult to conceal well, create too much noise, or be needed more in other areas. Sniper team members provide the commander with better observation and greater killing ranges than do other soldiers.

e. **Force Security.** Snipers can be used as an integral part of the security effort. They can help acquire and destroy targets, augment the security element by occupying concealed positions for long periods, observe and direct indirect fires (to maintain their security), and engage targets. Selective long-range sniper fires are difficult for the enemy to detect. A few well-placed shots can disrupt enemy reconnaissance efforts, force him to deploy into combat formations, and deceive him as to the location of the main battle area. The sniper's stealth skills counter the skills of enemy reconnaissance elements. Snipers can be used where scout or rifle platoon mobility is unnecessary, freeing the scouts and riflemen to cover other sectors. Snipers can also be used to direct ground maneuver elements toward detected targets. This also helps maintain security so ground maneuver elements can be used against successive echelons of attacking enemy.

f. **Strongpoint Employment.** Snipers should be tasked to support any unit defending a strongpoint. The characteristics of the sniper team enable it to adapt to perform independent harassing and observation tasks in support of the force in the strongpoint, either from inside or outside the strongpoint.

g. **Reverse Slope Defense.** Snipers can provide effective long-range fires from positions forward of the topographical crest (or on the counterslope if the unit is occupying a reverse slope defense).

F-5. RETROGRADE EMPLOYMENT

The sniper team must know the concept, intent, scheme of maneuver, withdrawal times or conditions and priorities, routes, support positions, rally points, and locations of obstacles. Both engagement and disengagement criteria must be planned and coordinated to ensure snipers achieve the desired effect without compromising their positions.

a. **Force Enemy Deployment.** Snipers can help the delaying force cause the enemy to deploy prematurely during retrograde operations. They help by inflicting casualties with accurate, long-range small-arms fire. When the enemy receives effective small-arms fire from unknown positions, he is likely to assume he is near an enemy position (most likely one with ATGMs) and to begin maneuvering to a position of advantage against the perceived threat. Using a sniper team, the commander can achieve the same effect he could with another infantry unit. The snipers' stealth also gives them a better chance of infiltrating out of positions close to the enemy.

b. **Repositioning.** Delaying forces risk being bypassed or overtaken by attacking enemy forces. Commanders may provide transportation to move snipers to successive positions. Vehicles must remain in defilade positions to the rear of the sniper position, or they must occupy different positions away from the sniper's area of operations to avoid compromising the sniper's position. In either case, a linkup point, egress routes, and conditions for executing the linkup must be fully coordinated. Commanders may also provide communications assets to the sniper team to facilitate control and movement.

c. **Infiltration.** Snipers may be required to infiltrate back to friendly positions. Their infiltration plans must be fully coordinated to avoid fratricide when they try to reenter a friendly position. When planning successive positions, the commander must realize the sniper team may be unavailable for use if it is destroyed or is having difficulty disengaging from an enemy force. The commander must consider carefully how and where he wants snipers to contribute to the operation. Planning too many positions for the sniper team in a fast-paced retrograde may result in failure.

d. **Sniper Tasks.** Snipers may be assigned any of the following specific tasks:

- Delay the enemy by inflicting casualties.
- Observe avenues of approach.
- Cover key obstacles with precision fire.
- Direct artillery fire against large enemy formations.

F-6. URBAN OPERATIONS EMPLOYMENT

The value of the sniper to a unit conducting urban operations depends on several factors, including the type of operation, level of conflict, and rules of engagement. Where ROE allow destruction, the snipers may not be needed since other weapons systems available

to a mechanized force have greater destructive effect. But where ROE prohibit collateral damage, snipers may be the most valuable tool the commander has to employ.

a. **Urban Terrain.** Sniper effectiveness depends partly on the terrain. The characteristics of an urban area degrade control. To provide timely and effective support, the sniper must have a clear understanding of the scheme of maneuver and commander's intent.

(1) Observation and fields of fire are clearly defined by roadways, but rooftops, windows, and doorways limit surveillance. Each requires constant observation. The effects of smoke from military obscurants and burning buildings can degrade what otherwise appears to be an excellent vantage point. All-round defense becomes even more important because the enemy can fire from many directions and because enemy infiltration attempts must be countered.

(2) Cover and concealment are excellent for both the attacker and defender. The defender has a decisive advantage. The attacker normally exposes himself during movement through the area.

(3) Avenues of approach inside buildings are best. Movement there is less easily detected than movement through the streets. The sniper must be conscious of all avenues of approach and must be prepared to engage targets that appear on any of them.

b. **Positioning.** Snipers should be positioned in buildings of masonry construction that offer long-range fields of fire and all-round observation. The sniper has an advantage because he does not have to move with, or be positioned with, lead elements. He may occupy a higher position to the rear or flanks and some distance away from the element he is supporting. By operating far from the other elements, a sniper avoids decisive engagement but remains close enough to kill distant targets threatening the unit. Snipers should not be placed in obvious positions (such as church steeples and rooftops) since the enemy often observes these and targets them for destruction. Indirect fires can generally penetrate rooftops and cause casualties in top floors of buildings. Snipers should not be positioned where there is heavy traffic because these areas invite enemy observation as well.

c. **Multiple Positions.** Snipers should operate throughout the area of operations, moving with and supporting the company teams as necessary. Some teams may operate independent of other forces. They search for targets of opportunity, especially for enemy snipers. Since a single position may not afford adequate observation for the entire team without increasing the risk of detection by the enemy, the team may occupy multiple positions. Separate positions must maintain mutual support. Each team should also establish alternate and supplementary positions.

d. **Tasks.** The commander may assign the following tasks to snipers:

- Conduct countersniper operations.
- Kill targets of opportunity. (The sniper team assigns priorities to these targets based on an understanding of the commander's intent, for example, engaging enemy snipers, then leaders, vehicle commanders, radio men, sappers, and machine gun crews, in that order.)
- Deny enemy access to certain areas or avenues of approach (control key terrain).
- Provide fire support for barricades and other obstacles.
- Maintain surveillance of flank and rear avenues of approach (screen).

- Support local counterattacks with precision fire.

F-7. STABILITY OPERATIONS AND SUPPORT OPERATIONS

Snipers can be valuable to commanders in stability operations and support operations. Since ROE normally limit collateral damage and civilian casualties, snipers can selectively kill or wound key individuals who pose a threat to friendly forces. This selective engagement avoids unacceptable civilian casualties or collateral damage. Targets often hide in the midst of the civilian populace, which makes them virtually invulnerable to US forces that cannot destroy these targets without causing innocent casualties. An example would be a lone gunman in a crowd who fires at soldiers manning a roadblock. The soldiers must first identify the gunman (this is nearly impossible from their vantage point). Then, without hurting innocent bystanders, they must stop him from continuing to fire or from fleeing. This is an easier task for an overwatching sniper than for infantry on the ground. The sniper can look down on the crowd, use his optics to scan continuously, and employ precision fire to eliminate the identified enemy without harming bystanders. Though other unit optical systems may supplement the surveillance effort (Javelins and TOWs from the ground or from the upper floors of buildings), they do not engage the target because of the risk of innocent casualties. After identifying the target, Javelins and TOWs still need time to guide a precision weapon or maneuver a unit to address the target. The sniper rifle provides the commander the only system that can both identify and engage the target.

F-8. RIVER CROSSINGS

Sniper teams, by virtue of their observation and precision-fire capabilities, are uniquely adaptable to the initial stages of a river crossing. They are normally employed in general support of the TF both before and during the crossing.

a. **Positioning.** Snipers assume positions across the total width of the crossing area (if possible) before the crossing. Their main task is to observe. They report all sightings of enemy positions and activity immediately and provide a stealthy observation capability not otherwise available to the commander. Their stealth prevents the enemy from learning key facts like what type of unit is trying to cross. The snipers supplement normal reconnaissance assets.

b. **Crossing Support.** Snipers provide support during the crossing by continuing to observe and suppress enemy OPs and other key targets that heavier supporting elements might overlook. The snipers' ability to continue to provide close-in suppressive fire makes continuous fire support possible up to the moment elements reach the far side and begin their movement to establish the bridgehead line. Snipers should be positioned as early as possible, preferably as part of the reconnaissance force. Their movement across the river must also be planned in advance. How they will get across and where their subsequent positions will be must be coordinated. Generally, they displace once friendly elements reach the far side.

c. **Inserted Force Support.** Snipers expand the capability of the inserted force to engage threatening targets at long ranges. Once on the far side, snipers may screen the flank or rear of the crossing force, infiltrate to destroy key targets (such as a demolition guard or fortified emplacement), or man OPs well to the front of the crossing force. This

placement increases both early warning time and the crossing force's ability to disrupt enemy counterattack forces.

F-9. PATROLLING

The effective employment of sniper teams with any size or type of patrol is limited only by the terrain and the patrol leader's ingenuity. Snipers must know and be able to apply all aspects of patrolling.

a. **Reconnaissance Patrols.** Snipers normally remain with the security element during reconnaissance patrols. If terrain permits, snipers can provide long-range support to enable the reconnaissance element to patrol farther from the security element. To prevent compromise of the reconnaissance element's position, snipers fire only in self-defense or when ordered by the patrol leader. Normally, the only appropriate time to fire at a target of opportunity is when extraction or departure from the position is imminent and firing will not endanger the success of the patrol.

b. **Raid Patrols.** Sniper employment on a raid depends on the time of day and the size of the patrol. When the patrol needs maximum firepower and its size must be limited, snipers may be excluded. If, on the other hand, the patrol needs long-range precision fire and its size permits, sniper teams may be attached to the security element. If appropriate, the sniper team may be attached to the support element to help provide long-range supporting fires. When attached to the security element, the sniper team helps observe, helps prevent enemy escape from the objective area, and helps cover the withdrawal of the assault force to the rally point. When the element withdraws from the rally point, the sniper team may stay behind to delay and harass enemy counteraction or pursuit.

c. **Ambush Patrols.** During ambushes, snipers are positioned in areas that afford observation and fields of fire on terrain features the enemy might use for cover after the ambush has begun. The snipers' long-range capability allows them to be positioned away from the main body. Sniper fires are coordinated into the fire plan. Once the signal to initiate fires is given, snipers add their fires to the rest of the patrols. Snipers shoot leaders, radio operators, and crew-served weapons teams. If the enemy is mounted, every effort is made to kill drivers of the lead and trail vehicles to block the road, prevent escape, and create confusion. Snipers may remain in position to cover the withdrawal of the patrol.